



Ambassador

*Embassy of Turkey
Washington, D. C.*

October 25, 2019

Dear Representative,

As you may recall, I had extensively shared Turkey's concerns and the profound disappointment regarding the H. Res. 296, "Affirming the United States record on the Armenian genocide".

The resolution is expected to be discussed in the Committee on Rules on October 28, 2019. Following this discussion, I understand that it might be voted on the floor of the House of Representatives next week.

Similar to the ones that were introduced during the previous sessions of the House of Representatives, H. Res. 296, which also solely reflects the biased Armenian narrative, would not be helpful to promote an atmosphere of reconciliation between Turkey and Armenia.

Turkey has made important efforts in addressing its history and in seeking a common ground with Armenia. Our archives are open and available without any restrictions for all to study. Furthermore, with a view to reviewing past events, we proposed the establishment of a Joint Historical Commission with the involvement of scholars from Turkey, Armenia as well as international academia. Turkey's efforts to reach a just and common understanding with the Armenians on the tragic events of 1915, which occurred during the great human sufferings of World War I, will continue unabatedly.

It should not be disregarded that counterproductive initiatives, such as H. Res. 296, will considerably poison the political environment between Turkey and the United States, at a time when regional and international developments require extensive collaboration and cooperation between our two countries more than ever before.

On the other hand, our economic cooperation has proven to be of critical importance. Turkey's significant growth over the past years, propelling her to become a G-20 nation, has undoubtedly benefited the US economy, as well. Turkey and the United States share a valued economic partnership that sustains thousands of American jobs. Not only is Turkey an export market for a substantial number of prominent US companies. Turkish companies have also significantly invested in the United States, in particular in Connecticut, Texas, Pennsylvania, Florida, New York, New Jersey, Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Louisiana, Arkansas, New Mexico, and many other states and provide employment to considerable number of American citizens.

Currently, upon the instructions by our Presidents, we are exploring ways to increase our trade volume to 100 billion US Dollars in the near future. The recent visit of Secretary of Commerce to Turkey provided fresh impetus not only to our economic relations, but to our bilateral cooperation in general, as well.

In this respect, please also note that legislations such as H. Res. 296 deeply disturbs and alienates the Turkish American community in the United States. We are concerned that increasing number of initiatives that harbor baseless claims against Turkey could create a strong resentment among hundreds of thousands of Turkish American voters.

Does the United States Congress really want to take sides in a century old historical discussion against a NATO ally; particularly in this period, when closer relations between Turkey and the United States are imperative to global and regional stability and peace?

I would like to strongly encourage you to keep these important facts in mind and remember the importance of the continued Turkey-US partnership, before a possible House vote regarding the disputed and controversial events of 1915. Moreover, I call upon you not to play a part in creating a permanent negative resentment in our historically close and friendly relations, but rather to contribute to efforts aimed at the further improvement of this critical partnership, which serves to advance and protect our countries' national security and economic interests.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Serdar Kılıç', written over the printed name.

Serdar Kılıç

AGR TALKING POINTS

1. Turkey has acknowledged the tragic nature of the events of 1915.

Annual statement. Turkey does not deny the suffering of Armenians and other minorities during the First World War. President Erdogan has acknowledged the tragic events of 1915 during each of the last five years with an annual statement. Last year, in a letter to the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul, he said “I remember with respect the Ottoman Armenians who lost their lives, and offer my sincere condolences to their children and descendants... To be aware of the sufferings of our Armenian citizens ... and to share these pains is a requirement of the conscientious and moral posture of the Turkish nation.”

Proper characterization. While Turkey acknowledges that the sufferings occurred, it should be expected that these deaths were result of civil war and unrest – not a systematic targeting of a group of individuals for ethnic or religious reasons.

UN position. The United Nations does not deem the events of 1915 a “genocide.”

Balance needed. Besides any political repercussions, this is unfair to the memory of other citizens of the Ottoman Empire who suffered from the civil war and unrest during the same period from all ethnicities and religions. According to official statistics, more than 2.5 million Anatolian Muslims perished during this period.

2. Passage of AGR will harm U.S.-Turkish relations.

Treatment of allies. Turkey is a NATO ally, and this is a critical time for the U.S.-Turkey relationship.

AGR deeply disturbs and alienates the Turkish American community in the United States.

3. Passage of AGR will cause long-term harm to Turkish-Armenian relations.

Protocols. The Foreign Ministers of Turkey and Armenia signed protocols on October 10, 2009 to establish bilateral relations and improved economic ties. Passage of AGR by Congress will result in a long-term set back to efforts to normalize relations.

Positive alternatives. In the past, some in Congress have introduced resolutions calling for a more positive approach, promoting “equitable, constructive, stable, and durable Armenian-Turkish relations for the next 100 years based upon the two countries' common interests and the United States' significant security interests in the region.”

4. Any declaration is best made by historians, not legislative bodies.

Legal implications. Genocide has a specific legal definition. It is defined in Article 2 of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, and requires an “intent to destroy” a national, ethnic, racial or religious group. The events of 1915 have never been historically or legally substantiated as genocide.

Joint Historical Commission. In 2009, the Foreign Ministers of Turkey and Armenia committed to establish procedures to jointly study their common history, including the historical controversy in question.

Turkey has opened its archives to researchers around the world and proposed the establishment of a Joint Historical Commission to be composed of Turkish, Armenian and third country historians in order to shed an objective and scientific light on this controversy. It was the Armenian side which refused to open its archives and walked away from its earlier agreement for the establishment of the Joint Historical Commission. The Armenian side also refrained from approving the protocols which was signed between Turkey and Armenia in 2009.

Importance of dialogue. A peaceful common future between Turks and Armenians can be built on a solid basis only through dialogue. Declaratory decisions by parliaments that voice the concerns and views of only one party hamper any chance of such dialogue.